

**23rd International Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and United Nations
Advisers (#NDM-UN)
Mine Action for People and Planet: Solutions, Commitments, Action
11 – 14 February 2020, Palais des Nations, Geneva
Chair's Summary**

The 23rd International Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and United Nations Advisers (NDM-UN) took place from 11-14 February 2020 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva. The United Nations Mine Action Service convened and coordinated the meeting with the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action (IACG-MA). Feedback from the post-conference survey shows that 87% of responders rated the logistical and organisation arrangements between excellent and good.

Over 500 participants attended the meeting, with almost equal representation from men and women, comprising National Directors of mine action programmes, United Nations advisers, donor representatives, academics, civil society and the private sector from more than 80 countries and territories. This annual meeting brought together the full range of stakeholders from across the sector to review challenges and progress, exchange best practices and lessons learnt under the theme *Mine Action for People and Planet: Solutions, Commitments, Action*.

At the opening ceremony, a video-message by Under-Secretary-General Jean-Pierre Lacroix, Chair of the IACG-MA, underlined the connection between the Secretary-General's launch of the *Decade of Action* and the call of the NDM-UN23 to discuss solutions and commitments for action to realize collectively the 2030 Agenda. The UNHCR Director of the Division of International Protection stressed the criticality of collaboration among humanitarian actors, and the important work carried-out in that regard by the IACG-MA. She further considered mine action as “*an essential prerequisite to the dignified and safe return*” of refugees and IDPs. The opening segment concluded with an inspirational message delivered by the Refugee Youth Ambassador, Ms. Aya Abdullah, on the human story of refugees fleeing war and risking being killed or maimed. She advocated for the inclusion of youth in post-conflict and peacebuilding processes: “*Armed conflicts are killing and maiming a record number of children, forcing them to flee their homes. They are fast becoming a lost generation. I am a firm believer that young people have a passion, desire, and ability to be connectors and peacebuilders.*”

The organizers prioritised gender and geographical balance across plenary and side event panels, which was acknowledged and appreciated by participants. Women represented 45% of plenary session speakers, while eight National Directors of mine action programmes and three ambassadors of affected countries were panellists across the seven plenary sessions. Feedback from the post-conference survey indicated 70 to 80% of responders rated the plenaries as either good or excellent. The plenary on Improvised Explosive Devices was the most appreciated with 80% of responders rating it either excellent or good. The dedicated day for side-events was hugely successful once again with participants exchanging on country-focused experiences, engaging in thematic discussions and identifying opportunities in innovations and technologies in support of mine action. This wide range of side-event topics was highly noted by participants, rating on average either good or excellent by 81% of survey responders.

Access to presentations and audio from plenaries, as well as some side events is available [here](#).

This year, the NDM-UN23 featured two new events: a 30-minute session updating participants on the implementation of the UN strategy, as well as regional breakout sessions to heighten the profile and exchange on regional approaches.

In addition, the topic of environment was introduced reflecting the current global concern and one of the priorities of the Secretary-General. The first plenary session introduced the linkage between mine action and the environment, there were two side-events on this topic, and a press conference was dedicated to mine action and the environment. Plenaries continued to prioritize the centrality of people, with exchanges of good practices on the meaningful inclusion of victims, women, youth in mine action; the practice of digital risk education to reach affected people; opportunities to mainstream mine action into development; the criticality of partnering with humanitarian actors to respond to people in need; and the promotion of collective and innovative solutions to respond to the complex threat posed by IEDs to civilians.

Plenary 1 Mine Action and the Environment

The Panel discussed the ecological effects of the removal of mines and ERW, but also put forward the greater negative impact of contamination by explosive ordnance on soil and land, and hence the necessity for mine action to intervene to protect the environment. Mine action interventions also improve the post-conflict environment enabling populations to return home, reopen health facilities, schools, markets, and re-use land. The panel further highlighted that the mine action sector has learned how to reduce its environmental impact with the development of IMAS on Environment and the use of environmental surveys to inform mine action activities.

The session recommended to (i) increase the systematic use of environmental surveys to inform mine action programming, (ii) improve data and evidence collection on the environmental impact of mine action activities, as well as (iii) to look at how other sectors have integrated their work in environmental considerations.

Plenary 2 Mine Action for People: Dimensions of Diversity

In opening the plenary session, the Sudanese President of the 18th Meeting of States Parties to the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention stated the task of mine action is “*to support the reconstruction of marginalized communities*”. The session presented as best practice the organisation of regional consultations with the participation of victims, women and youth in support of decision-making processes, and the prioritization of diversity in pillars of mine action to reach targeted beneficiaries including by linguistics, age, and gender. The discussion further underscored that sustainable capacity must be established at the institutional and leadership level of the mine action authority for the mainstreaming of diversity policy in all areas of responsibility. It was also highlighted that the integration of diverse groups in mine action contributes to consolidate peace and develop equal societies.

The session recommended that (i) the sector should invest efforts in creating an enabling environment to retain women through empowerment and leadership, (ii) donor assistance should better support gender and diversity strategies ensuring that mine action contributes to transformative, inclusive and equal societies, and (iii) that gender and diversity considerations should not only translate into external activities/projects, but be mainstreamed into the institutional and internal process including the SOPs for policies, planning, and budgeting.

Plenary 3 Regional Approaches to Mine Action

This session was convened for the five regional breakout groups to report back to the plenary audience on the regional breakout meetings organised the day before. The discussion focused on the benefits of regional exchange on experiences and current trends within a region. The panellists identified opportunities to develop regional approaches on common areas of concern: improvised explosive devices, management of residual contamination, and delivery of risk education. The discussion furthermore concluded that multi-lateral organizations could have a greater role in promoting the regional exchange of specialized knowledge.

The session recommended as potential areas to further regional approaches: (i) access to mine action documentation in other languages than English, (ii) development of regional approaches to IEDs, (iii) leveraging the role of regional/sub-regional organizations, and (iv) regional exchange of technical expertise in management of residual contamination and risk education.

Plenary 4 Thinking Safety and Acting Safely in the Digital Age

This session looked at initiatives in risk education that use technology and digital engagement to improve coverage, quality, integration, equity and the cost-effectiveness of explosive ordnance risk education campaigns. In an urbanized world, digital technologies can be a successful multiplier, the message can be adapted more easily to target audiences and therefore be cost effective. In addition, the digital age provides opportunity for feedback and for youth to become more engaged and share RE messages and their opinions with others. Nonetheless, panellists underlined some of the limitations, questioning how to measure behavioural change, how to measure people reached and how to protect digital message recipients. Means of communication still need to be tested and tailored to the audience and promote two-way communication.

This session recommended the mine action sector (i) to look at how to make the best use of digital opportunities to improve the reach of tailored RE messaging, as well as (ii) to reconsider the way to measure the impact of digital RE campaigns.

Plenary 5 SDGs - From Theory to Practice: Linking Mine Action to SDGs

The session discussed the development of the targets and indicators to mainstream and monitor the contribution of mine action in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The plenary presented a case study from a country where a national SDG 18 on mine action was introduced, and a national experience sharing the challenges and opportunities of mainstreaming mine action into development. The discussion agreed that the SDGs framework could be used to gain an understanding of population needs to then inform planning of mine action activities. The panellists also emphasized that the SDG framework should also be integrated in the monitoring and evaluation phase. Mine action programming and decision making should consider the SDG framework to shift the focus from humanitarian response to development.

The session recommended that the mine action sector uses SDGs as (i) the framework to inform prioritization of activities at the national level, and (ii) to evaluate the impact of mine action.

Plenary 6 - Partnerships to Save Lives in Humanitarian Emergencies

This session explored how, in the context of humanitarian emergencies, working in coordination with other humanitarian actors can help mine action organizations to get a better understanding of humanitarian needs and to prioritize their activities in support of critical lifesaving relief efforts such as access to health, water, education, and livelihoods. The panellists highlighted the collaboration between the Education Cluster, and the Child Protection and Mine Action Areas of Responsibility to enhance the quality and coverage of services provided to children in the area of explosive ordnance risk education and victim assistance to child survivors. The discussion also emphasized that sharing information on contamination with humanitarian organizations is the first step in ensuring that they are aware of the risks and able to respond to needs safely, adequately and at the right moment. Yet, measures for data protection are necessary to mitigate various risks and protect beneficiaries. It was noted that strategic planning documents such as Humanitarian Needs Overviews and Humanitarian Response Plans enhance prioritization of all humanitarian activities including of mine action activities once they are coordinated through this joint analysis and response framework.

This session recommended that (i) donors support mine action projects proposed in humanitarian response plans; (ii) that the Mine Action Area of Responsibility conducts in 2020 a mapping of humanitarian data sources against the mine action analytical framework.

Plenary 7 – Improvised explosive devices: Connecting actors for solutions

This session focused on the value of collaboration and sharing of information between the various actors of the IED sector, including humanitarian, private sector, industry, military and academic representatives, to enhance IED solutions. The discussion showed the value of sharing information at the multilateral level to contribute to a common understanding of threats and build on lessons learned (impact of incidents on civilians, prevailing trends, the design of devices, technical and technological needs, etc.). The sharing of information and increased dialogue with other humanitarian actors was also highlighted as key in a complex environment to ensure that the humanitarian response adapts to the context to better protect lives and infrastructure, considering also the type of information that can be shared and how it can be shared. Last, the session invited the mine action sector to consider more innovative collaboration with industry, researchers, academia to develop collective response to an evolving threat through the promotion of technological solutions.

The session recommended to (i) develop at the domestic level institutional arrangements that will foster the sharing of information across various national agencies in order to build a coherent national response to the IED threat, and (ii) to promote partnerships with actors outside the mine action sector to develop tailored and innovative response to a multifaceted threat for which the technology and tactics evolve rapidly.

The Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva closed the four-day international meeting stating that “*Mine action is not only about physical removal of mines or saving lives, but also restoring livelihoods, building resilience, and creating opportunities for economic development.*”

Side-events

Safe Ground: Turning Minefields into Playing Fields - The panellists presented the purpose of the five-year advocacy and fundraising campaign “Safe-Ground” launched by the Secretary-General in 2019 to bring attention and assistance to the survivors of explosive ordnance incidents. The event discussed how partners can be involved, and what has been achieved in the first months since the launch.

Mine Action Information Management of the Future - This event looked at the tools, approaches and expanded areas of influence and impact of IM systems, providing a view into the future of Information Management for Humanitarian Mine Action.

Libya: The Toxic and Explosive Legacy of Modern Conflict –The panellists discussed the technical and environmental challenges that the disposal of liquid-fuelled strategic missile systems poses in Libya. The event furthermore presented on the engagement between the Libyan authorities, Member States and UNMAS to develop a plan for decommissioning these systems in an environmentally acceptable way.

Launch of the SMART IED Threat Mitigation Technology Roadmap (SMiTMiTR) - The event launched the SMiTMiTR, a platform that compiles, cross-references and shares the latest generic information on IED threats and on the technology available to mitigate those threats in pursuit of smart solutions. The event explained to participants the procedures to participate – including accessing, adding, and sharing information.

Iranian Humanitarian Mine Action Activities - The Mine Action Center of the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRMAC) presented its experience in humanitarian clearance, detecting, neutralization and destruction of ERWs, VA and mine risk education also in collaboration with ICRC. IRMAC furthermore presented its capability to provide training in the region through its International Training Complex.

Risk education in the Oslo Action Plan: From Vision to Reality - Through an interactive group discussion format, this side event looked at how to strengthen protection of civilians through explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) and translate the commitments made in Oslo into action. Topics included IED risk education, digital EORE technologies, EORE training needs, EORE impact assessment and integration of EORE with broader protection, development and education efforts.

Environmental Impact and Climate Change Adaptation in Mine Action – The event discussed the potential negative consequences of clearance on the local environment: physical damage to agricultural areas and natural resources as well as the environmental footprint of clearance operations. Panellists also identified the opportunities, and tools for improved integration of environmental considerations into mine action to ensure that operations “do no harm” and provide socio-economic development opportunities for local communities after clearance.

South Sudan - Achieving Article Five compliance and Delivering a Long-Term Solution The national mine action authority presented on the current status of contamination and the progress that has been made since independence in 2011, as well as the plans to complete

clearance by its 2026 deadline. Additionally, the presentation touched on the national strategy and the projected transition to national ownership of the programme.

Meeting the Challenge Together: Advancing Gender & Diversity in Project Implementation - This side-event focused on efforts towards advancing gender and diversity in implementing mine action, looking at challenges and best practices in mainstreaming endeavours in human resources and procurement.

United for Survivors: Solutions, Commitments, Action - The event discussed challenges faced by governments in coping with the rising number of victims and what policy changes are required to better support victims of explosive ordnance. The panellists underlined that Victim Assistance is part of the national health response and cannot be a responsibility for mine action alone, while highlighting the objectives set by the Oslo Action Plan in strengthening VA.

Iraq - Local Solutions for National Challenges: Operational Models and Support to National Capacities – The panel shared the experience of Iraq where international organizations are closely collaborating with the Government of Iraq to implement innovative solutions to the threats of explosive hazards while ensuring sustainability and nationalization of those efforts.

A Mine-Free World by 2025: The Need for Innovation – This panel demonstrated that innovation is an extremely valuable ally in the commitment to a mine-free world by 2025. Participants also shared lessons learned in the use of innovative methods and advocated for the allocation of funds to innovation.

Accident and Incident Reporting Requirements: A Burden or an Essential Learning Tool - This side event discussed methodologies for collecting, analysing, storing and disseminating data on accidents and incidents in mine action. The event raised awareness on the importance of timely and accurate reporting of work-related accidents and incidents stressing the role and involvement of all mine action partners.

Sudan – Mine Action and Peace: Sudan’s Experience and Future – This event demonstrated the paramount importance of clearing humanitarian corridors from explosive ordnance requiring strong cooperation among the Government of Sudan, opposition groups, the United Nations and the donor community. This panel also shared experiences of successful contribution of mine action to peace process.

Survey, Clearance and Risk Education of Improvised Mines - Challenges, Solutions and Best Practices - This event exchanged on the specific threat that anti-personnel mines of an improvised nature pose to the civilian populations and the experiences of Afghanistan and Iraq. The discussion emphasized the need for an international commitment from all stakeholders— governments, donor communities, specialized agencies, research and advocacy groups in responding to the complex challenge.

Implementing the Oslo Review Conference Decisions: A Landmine Free 2025 Perspective – This side event reflected on the support required to achieve the Oslo Action Plan over the next five years, in particular for clearance completion by 2025. The discussion put forward what is needed to translate the commitments made in Oslo into practice, especially for political, technical and financial policy.